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ABSTRACT

A study sought to identify leadership styles of basketball coaches and to investigate the relationship between leadership style and criteria by which coaches select players. Thirty-seven elementary, high school, and college/professional coaches participated. Two instruments were used: the T-P Leadership questionnaire, which measures two dimensions of leadership--task oriented or people oriented, and the Least Preferred Co-Worker Scale (LPC). Findings suggested that the LPC Scale and the T-P Leadership questionnaire assessed different dimensions of leadership style. A significant inverse relationship was found between people-oriented leadership style and task-oriented leadership style. Assessment by the T-P Leadership questionnaire indicated that subjects were more concerned with winning than with developing interpersonal relationships. Results also suggested that task oriented coaches tended not to select basketball players to the guard or forward positions, based on the criteria of leadership ability. Task oriented coaches were perceived as autocratic and unwilling to share leadership authority. (JD)

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"An Investigation of the Leadership Style of Selected Basketball Coaches"

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Introduction

Recently sport sociologists have attempted to investigate the leadership style of athletes and coaches across various sports. It appears that this difference between the leadership styles of coaches and athletes may lead to discipline problems within the various teams.

To better understand the conflict in American Sport between coaching leadership style, we must first review the literature as it relates to leadership style.

Theorists no longer believe that leadership derives entirely from the group process or entirely from within the individual. There have been numerous theories formulated to investigate the emergence of leaders and leadership style. Early theorists sought to explain leadership from a trait approach and have concluded that leaders possess a great number of "desirable" personality traits (Ogilvie & Tulko, 1970; Cratty, 1973).

Other theorists have attempted to explain leadership from a generic viewpoint (DuVall, 1943; Borg, 1958). These theorists studied the heredity background of great men and attempted to explain leadership on the basis of inherited traits. It was the belief of these theorists that a leader was endowed, from birth, with superior qualities that differentiate him/her from followers. This would suggest that under various situations, the leadership role will not change.

Finally, theorists have attempted to explain leadership from a situational viewpoint (Lewin, 1935; Brown, 1936; Schneider, 1937). These theorists stated that leadership was a result of time, place and circumstances. Thus, under various situations, leadership will emerge.

One of the most widely accepted personal-situational theories of leadership effectiveness is Fiedler's contingency theory. Fiedler's contingency model has received a great deal of attention concerning task and people oriented leadership behavior since its exception in 1967. Subjects were asked to think of everyone with whom they had ever worked and to describe the person with whom they could work least efficiently. Fiedler (1969) concluded that high LPC leaders tended to be task oriented, objective and distant. Groups led by low LPC leaders inclined to be more effective in situations either highly favorable or highly unfavorable for the leader. High LPC (person oriented) leaders were more effective in group performance in situations that are more moderately favorable for the leader.

Sergiovanni, Metzcus, and Burden (1969) seem to substantiate present literature in that they stated leadership style followed one of two dimensions: (1) focusing on people and (2) focusing on the job.

The T-P Leadership Questionnaire is a direct result of the empirical research of Sergiovanni, Metzcus and Burden (1969) and originated from the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire form XII (LBDQ). The T-P Leadership Questionnaire measures leadership conceptually between task oriented and people oriented leadership style.

Brooks (1976) administered the T-P Leadership Questionnaire to the following college level athletes and coaches: (1) baseball coaches; (2) baseball team captains; (3) baseball players; and (4) basketball coaches. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between unsuccessful and successful basketball and baseball coaches in the variable leadership style. The results of the analysis conducted between baseball coaches, captains and players indicated that coaches have a significantly lower score on people oriented leadership style than did the captains or players. There was no significant difference between the mean scores of the captains and players. The baseball and basketball coaches possessed various levels of task and people oriented leadership style. There was no unique leadership style that characterized successful coaches.

Various leadership styles have been identified in the literature. However, the research has been primarily concerned with two types of leadership style - authoritative (task) and democratic (people). To date, no research has investigated and correlated scores on the LPC with scores on the T-P Leadership Questionnaire. Both questionnaires are valid measures of task and people oriented leadership styles.

In addition, no research study has attempted to investigate the relationship between leadership style and the criteria by which coaches select players to their teams.

Purpose

The purposes of this study were: (1) to investigate the leadership style of selected elementary, high school, and college/professional level basketball coaches; (2) to investigate the relationship between scores on T-P Leadership Questionnaire and scores on Fiedler's Least Preferred Co-Worker (LPC) Scale and; (3) to investigate the relationship between leadership style and the criteria utilized by basketball coaches to select players to their team.

It was hypothesized that there would be a significant positive relationship between score on the LPC scale and scores on the T-P Leadership Questionnaire. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant positive relationship between leadership style and the criteria utilized by coaches to select players to their teams.

Method

Subjects

Basketball coaches (N = 100) who participated in Gale Catlett's Basketball Camp (Summer, 1981) at West Virginia University were asked to participate in this study. However, only thirty-seven (N = 37) basketball coaches (1 elementary, 33 high school, 3 college/professional) actually consented to participate in this study.

Instrumentation

The basketball coaches (N = 37) were administered: (1) Demographic Data Sheet, (2) T-P Leadership Questionnaire, (3) Fiedler's LPC Scale, and

(4) Criteria for Selection Scale. The basektball coaches completed the questionnaire at the conclusion of the basketball camp.

Coaches' leadership styles were assessed by the Least Preferred Co-Worker Scale (LPC) and the T-P Leadership Questionnaire. Coaching experience was determined from the Demographic Data Sheet. The criteria for selection scale was used to investigate how important selected characteristics or attributes were to the coach's selection decision. A list of characteristics and attributes often utilized by coaches for selecting players was provided. This scale provided a measure of coaching "style".

Results

The data revealed a significant inverse relationship between Task and People Oriented Leadership Styles ($r = -.39$; $p = .019$). (See Table I.) No significant relationship was found between scores on the LPC Scale and scores on task leadership style ($r = -.12$; $p = .48$). Also, no significant relationship was found between scores on the LPC Scale and scores on the People Oriented Leadership Style ($r = .00$; $p = .98$).

Table I

Intercorrelation Between LPC, People Leadership and Task Leadership

Variables	LPC	People Leadership	Task Leadership
1. LPC		.00	-.12
2. People Leadership	.00		-.39*
3. Task Leadership	-.12	-.39*	

*Significant at .05 level

A significant inverse relationship was found between LPC scores and criteria for selection variable-guard position; willingness to "sacrifice" for team ($r = -.37$; $p = .02$). A significant inverse relationship was found between task oriented leadership style and the criteria for selection variable-guard position; leadership ability ($r = -.38$; $p = .02$). (See Table II.)

Table II

Intercorrelation Between Leadership Style and the Criteria Utilized by Coaches to Select Basketball Players

Variables		LPC	People Leadership	Task Leadership
	Guard Position			
4.	"Coachable" attitude	.21	.18	-.13
5.	Desire to play basketball	.07	.21	-.03
6.	Leadership ability	.10	.10	-.38*
7.	Potential basketball talent	.09	.07	-.01
8.	Height	-.01	-.03	.01
9.	Speed and agility	-.04	.17	.36
10.	Jumping ability	-.17	-.01	-.06
11.	Shooting ability	.11	.18	-.23
12.	Value for team concept	.10	.10	.00
13.	Self-discipline	.05	.03	.14
14.	Willingness to "sacrifice" for team	-.37*	.03	-.06
15.	Competitive attitude	.01	.06	.27
16.	Intelligence	.17	-.01	.14
17.	Physical toughness	-.01	-.24	-.08
18.	Other	.05	-.26	.07

*Significant at .05 level

A significant positive relationship was found between People Oriented Leadership Style and criteria for selection variable-forward position: physical toughness ($r = .35$; $p = .04$). A significant inverse relationship was found between the task oriented leadership style and the criteria for selection variable-forward position: leadership ability ($r = -.35$; $p = .03$). (See Table III.)

Table III

Intercorrelation Between Leadership Style and the Criteria Utilized by Coaches to Select Basketball Players

Variables		LPC	People Leadership	Task Leadership
	Forward Position			
19.	"Coachable" attitude	.27	.07	-.08
20.	Desire to play basketball	.17	.08	.00

Table III (cont.)

Variables	LPC	People Leadership	Task Leadership
21. Leadership ability	.17	.06	-.35*
22. Potential basketball talent	-.07	-.01	.13
23. Height	-.01	.00	.13
24. Speed and agility	-.27	-.01	.04
25. Jumping ability	.30	.16	.07
26. Shooting ability	-.17	-.09	.10
27. Value for team concept	-.04	.16	-.11
28. Self-discipline	.04	-.01	-.02
29. Willing to "sacrifice" for team	-.10	-.07	-.26
30. Competitive attitude	.09	.11	.09
31. Intelligence	.14	-.10	-.04
32. Physical toughness	-.12	.35*	-.28
33. Other	-.17	-.10	.21

*Significant at .05 level

A significant inverse relationship was found between task oriented leadership style and the criteria for selection variable-center position: potential basketball talent ($r = -.34$; $p = .04$). A significant positive relationship was found between task oriented leadership style and criteria for selection variable-center position: other (mental toughness, aggressive) ($r = .45$; $p = .005$). (See Table IV.)

Table IV

Intercorrelation Between Leadership Style and the Criteria Utilized by Coaches to Select Basketball Players

Variables	LPC	People Leadership	Task Leadership
34. "Coachable" attitude	.25	.29	-.20
35. Desire to play basketball	.24	.08	.00
36. Leadership ability	.18	.21	-.19
37. Potential basketball talent	.14	.23	-.34*
38. Height	.09	-.25	.24
39. Speed and agility	-.14	.05	.01
40. Jumping ability	-.13	.26	.20
41. Shooting ability	-.17	-.11	.08
42. Value for team concept	-.12	-.04	-.08

Table IV (cont.)

Variables	LPC	People Leadership	Task Leadership
43. Self-discipline	.24	.14	-.13
44. Willingness to "sacrifice" for team	.24	.01	-.30
45. Competitive attitude	-.16	.01	.13
46. Intelligence	.13	-.03	-.13
47. Physical toughness	-.20	.09	.20
48. Other	-.04	-.28	.45*

*Significant at .05 level

Discussion

A basic purpose of this research study was to investigate the relationship between scores on the LPC Scale and scores on the T-P Leadership Questionnaire. Both instruments have been utilized by researchers to assess leadership style. Fiedler's (1971) contingency model stated that leaders with low least preferred co-worker (LPC) scores would be "task oriented" and leaders with high least preferred co-worker (LPC) scores would be "people oriented."

The T-P Leadership Questionnaire was developed by Sergiovanni, Metzcus and Furden (1969) as a revision of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). This instrument originally obtained measures along two dimensions of leadership behavior; initiating structure (task oriented leadership style) and consideration (people oriented leadership style).

The present research study did not find a significant relationship between LPC scores and scores on people leadership style and task leadership style. This finding tends to suggest that the LPC Scale and the T-P Leadership Questionnaire assess two different dimensions of leadership style.

A significant inverse relationship was found between People Leadership Style and Task Leadership Style. When the leadership style of the basketball coaches was assessed by the T-P Leadership Questionnaire, basketball coaches tended to be task oriented ($\bar{x}$ = 15.41). This finding tended to suggest that the basketball coaches who attended the basketball camp were more concerned with productivity (winning the contest) than they were with developing interpersonal relationships (people orientation, $\bar{x}$ = 6.86). Sergiovanni suggested that for effective productivity, a leader should be high on task leadership and high on people leadership.

The results of this research study also suggested that task oriented basketball coaches tend to utilize specific criteria for selecting basketball players to their teams. The task oriented coaches tend not to select basketball players to the guard of forward positions based upon the criteria leadership ability. It appears that the task oriented coach perceives himself as the leader on and off the basketball court. The task oriented coach is autocratic and appears to be unwilling to share this leadership authority.